

Customer Service Report for Fiscal Year 2002

In fiscal year 2002, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) conducted a new Customer Satisfaction Survey. The survey will be conducted annually. The results of this survey will be used to assess how well we meet your needs and how we can improve. Based on a five-point scale, with five equaling very satisfied and one equaling very dissatisfied with our customer service, you told us we earned a score of 4.3.

Over the past year, BEA worked to better identify its customer base and customer needs. We increased our outreach efforts by increasing our participation in professional conferences in order to receive valuable feedback. We recognize that continuous customer feedback is essential to better service and have established an electronic mailbox for your comments <customerservice@bea.gov>. We also established electronic customer mailboxes for the national and industry programs on BEA's Web site so that users can send their questions directly to BEA program experts.

This report highlights the year's accomplishments in customer service, undertaken pursuant to BEA's Strategic Plan.¹

Web site developments

During fiscal year 2002, BEA conducted a Web site redesign. Several immediate improvements were implemented: Delivering more basic data in downloadable form, including enhancing BEA contact information; expanding the availability of the back issues SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS; and improving the layout of the home page. A comprehensive A–Z index and a site search engine will be added later in calendar year 2002. A comprehensive site analysis and redesign project that will emphasize customer usability and accessibility in designing a new user interface and overall data presentation is being undertaken. In addition, the Web-related comments received on the 2002 BEA Customer Satisfaction Survey will be incorporated.

BEA implemented interactive Web pages that contain current and historical data from the balance of payments accounts and the industry accounts in easy to use formats. BEA also strengthened its Web site reliability by

adding backup capabilities to help ensure uninterrupted customer access to critical data.

National accounts

- Web site dissemination of the gross domestic product (GDP) news release, the associated technical note, the "Selected" NIPA Tables (PRN files and spreadsheets), and the section-508 compliant tables now occurs within a minute of the 8:30 a.m. release time. Previously, these data were posted on a flow basis between 8:35 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on the day of the release.
- Web site dissemination of the "computer purchases" table, the fixed-weighted price index table, and the three-decimal place tables has been accelerated by several hours on the day of the GDP release.
- Web site dissemination of the "underlying detail" file now occurs within seconds of the personal income release. The "key source data" table, which comes out with the "advance" estimates only, is posted almost immediately after the underlying detail table, a day earlier than one year ago.

Industry accounts

- In December 2001, BEA released the 1998 annual input-output (I-O) accounts, the third in a series of annual I-O accounts that provide more recent data than those in the benchmark I-O accounts, which are released on a 5-year cycle.
- In a June 2002 SURVEY article, BEA published a progress report on its research to develop estimates of GDP by industry on an accelerated schedule. As part of the research results, BEA provided illustrative estimates for 2001 of current GDP by industry for broad industry groups. These estimates provided a first look at the effects on industries of last year's economic slowdown and the events of September 11th.

International accounts

- BEA published the preliminary results of the 1999 benchmark survey of U.S. direct investment abroad. The estimates were presented on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) basis for the first time.
- BEA staff worked with the Federal Reserve Board, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and the U.S. Department of Treasury to more comprehensively

1. See "BEA's Strategic Plan for 2001–2005," SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS 82 (May 2002): 8–32.

This report was prepared by Verna Learnard.

cover short-term financial instruments. New survey forms were designed to enable BEA to resume coverage of cash on deposit with brokers, including that in margin accounts. In order to provide users with more timely and accurate data, BEA developed a preliminary plan for instituting quarterly surveys of the largest and most volatile types of traded services and for making related changes to existing benchmark and annual surveys.

- BEA staff worked with the Federal Reserve Board, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and the U.S. Department of Treasury to design new annual surveys of portfolio investment assets and liabilities. Annual liabilities surveys are being conducted beginning with data for 2001, and annual asset surveys are expected to be conducted beginning with data for 2003. The benchmark survey of selected services transactions was redesigned in order to cover important new categories of services, including those associated with the annual survey of selected services transactions. In response to suggestions from industry representatives, BEA developed new questions on services provided to foreign medical patients.
- BEA reduced respondent burden and improved processing efficiencies for the international accounts surveys by extending the electronic reporting options to six additional surveys.

Regional accounts

- BEA produced and released the State personal income estimates on a NAICS basis for the first time for 2001. BEA developed test estimates of pension distributions by State and an alternative set of estimates of retirement payment distributions by State.
- BEA established an interactive HELP file on its Web

site that guides customers through definitions and methodology for the gross state product estimates. The vintage of BEA's regional multiplier estimates were improved by incorporating, for the first time, BEA's annual national input-output accounts (for 1998) and the latest county-level data on wages (for 2000).

- BEA developed a prototype system to produce a new Web-based interactive, dynamic mapping capability for analyzing the gross state product estimates. This system will become available to users soon.

Internal improvements

BEA's employees are the most essential element of our service to customers. In order to attract and retain a highly qualified workforce, BEA conducted an internal organizational assessment survey. Based on the results, efforts in the coming year will focus on workforce development, communications, and quality of work life. Improvements in these areas will have a direct impact on our ability to innovate and improve BEA's statistics.

Access to BEA staff

BEA specialists are available during regular business hours. You can access the names and telephone numbers of BEA subject specialists on the Bureau's Web site at <www.bea.gov/bea/beatel.htm>, or you can e-mail BEA at <webmaster@bea.gov>. For a hard copy of "BEA's Contacts for Users" or other customer assistance, contact

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